

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13743

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CSCE, VT
SUBJ: VATICAN AND USSR IN CSCE CONTEXT

REF: MOSCOW 12565 (SOVIET PRESS SUMMARY AUG. 6-9, 1976)

1. DURING RECENT EXCHANGE WITH VATICAN'S DESK OFFICER FOR USSR,
WE MENTIONED SOVIET VIEW OF VATICAN IN CSCE CONTEXT AS APPEARED
IN ARTICLE BY L. VELIKOVICH IN NOVEYE VREMYA AUGUST 6 (REFTEL).
HE COMMENT WAS "GLAD TO HEAR THAT SOVIETS HAVE BEEN LISTENING."
HE ALSO ASKED FOR TEXT OF ARTICLE BECAUSE HE SAID THE SOVIET HAVE,
AS A GENERAL RULE, IGNORED VATICAN STATEMENTS ON INCOMPATIBILITY
OF MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY AND HAVE AVOIDED COMMENTING ON VATICAN
STATEMENTS OPPOSING THE "HISTORIC COMPROMISE" IN ITALY. ACTION
REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING FROM EMBASSY MOSCOW
TEXT IN RUSSIAN OR ENGLISH OF ABOVE ARTICLE.

2. IN CSCE CONTEXT, VATICAN OFFICIAL STATED THAT VATICAN WAS NOT
ENCOURAGED BY OVERALL SOVIET BEHAVIOR ON ISSUES OF INTEREST TO
VATICAN FOLLOWING SIGNING OF HELSINKI FINAL ACT. NEVERTHELESS,
HE WAS PLEASED TO ACKNOWLEDGE ANOTHER RECENT "TINY" GESTURE ON
PART OF SOVIETS WHEREBY TWO LITHUANIAN BISHOPS WERE PERMITTED TO
ATTEND INTERNATIONAL EUCHARIST CONGRESS IN PHILADELPHIA AUGUST
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1-8, AND SUBSEQUENTLY WERE ALSO AUTHORIZED TO VISIT ROME.

(THE PREVIOUS SOVIET "GESTURE" RELATED TO THE AUTHORIZATION OF ENTRY OF RELIGIOUS MATERIAL INTO LITHUANIA IN DECEMBER 1975.)

3. COMMENT: SOURCE'S COMMENT TYPIFIES VATICAN OFFICIAL COMMENTS REGARDING USSR. VATICAN FEELS FRUSTRATED IN ITS INTERMITTENT DIALOGUE WITH USSR. ITS QUIET DIPLOMACY HAS NOT MATURED ANY UNDERSTANDINGS ON RELIGIOUS ISSUES. SIMILARLY THE VATICAN'S PUBLIC SIGNALS, FOR BETTER RELATIONSHIPS, SUCH AS THE ONES ISSUED BY POPE PAUL DECEMBER 22, 1975 AND MAY 24, 1976, REMAIN OFFICIALLY IGNORED BY SOVIETS. VATICAN ALSO IS SENSITIVE TO COMMUNIST "INSTRUMENTALIZATION" OF ITS OSTPOLITIK, PARTICULARLY THE WAY EASTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS USE STATEMENTS FOLLOWING OFFICIAL TALKS WITH VATICAN. FOR THIS REASON, VATICAN REPRESENTATIVES IN THE LATEST TWO CONFERENCES WITH CZECH OFFICIALS HAVE REFUSED TO AUTHORIZE JOINT COMMUNIQUES. THE VATICAN HAS ALSO BEEN CRITICIZED BY CONSERVATIVES FOR NOT SPEAKING OUT MORE FORTHRIGHTLY AGAINST RELIGIOUS REPRESSION IN THE USSR AND HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF SACRIFICING FAITHFUL TO REAL POLITIK. THE VATICAN HAS PERSISTED IN ITS PATIENT POLICY OF ACCOMMODATION WITH EXISTING COMMUNIST REGIMES BUT IT HAS NOT ABSTAINED FROM ENUNCIATING THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF ATHEISTIC MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY. THIS HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY TRUE DURING THE PAST YEAR-LONG ITALIAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN.

4. IN ADDITION, THE VATICAN ORGAN L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO FROM TIME TO TIME PUBLICLY CHIDES COMMUNIST REGIMES FOR DENYING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OR IN POINTING OUT THE INCONGRUENCE OF PRACTICE AND "CONSTITUTIONAL" GUARANTEES FOR RELIGIOUS AND OTHER FREEDOMS IN COMMUNIST REGIMES. A RECENT EXAMPLE OCCURRED LAST WEEK WHEN L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (AUGUST 15) PUBLISHED THE DEPARTMENT'S COMPILATION OF STATEMENTS BY COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERS PRIOR TO ASSUMING POWER IN EASTERN EUROPE (WHICH WE PROVIDED TO VATICAN IN USIS ITALIAN TRANSLATION). THE EXCERPTS, PUBLISHED UNDER THE TITLE "COMMUNIST COUNTRIES: WORDS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY'S FACTS," ARE INTRODUCED BY SHORT EDITORIAL COMMENT WHICH STATES: "THE DOCUMENTATION DEMONSTRATES ELOQUENTLY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORDS PRONOUNCED IN THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THEN AND THE FACTS WHICH ARE TODAY'S REALITY." BEAUDRY

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